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Of the 53 Mexican-American full-time students at Cerritos College (Calif.) who completed questionnaires designed to determine their attitudes toward the institution and to detect possible reasons for their fellow Mexican-Americans' disinterest in attending college or dropping out of the institution, 90% reported that they themselves had not experienced any discrimination by the students or staff, 80% said that they felt socially accepted, and 50% indicated that the staff did not understand their problems. Major reasons cited by the respondents for the failure of other Mexican-Americans to attend college or to remain at Cerritos included (1) economic reasons, (2) problems with teachers, (3) academic problems, and (4) language problems. It was recommended that the college provide part-time employment and student loans for Mexican-Americans, that the programming of classes be improved, that regular counseling sessions be established to combat the dropout problem, and that special language arts classes be created for remedial work in English. (DG)

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SURVEY OF PERSONAL ATTITUDES ABOUT CERRITOS COLLEGE FROM FULL-TIME DAY STUDENTS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

by

Richard B. Robinson

for

PROFESSOR TERRY GIBBS,

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION DEPARTMENT AND STUDENTS ENROLLED IN

"EDUCATION FOR THE CULTURALLY DEPRIVED STUDENT",

CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE

LONG BEACH

and

CERRITOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NORWALK, CALIFORNIA

May, 1968

JC 680 291

Little attention has been directed toward the needs of the poor youngster living in Mexican-American communities, and it should come as no surprise to anybody that these children of low-income families generally do not do as well in school as children from more affluent ones.

Studies have already shown that high percentages of these youngsters drop out of public school as soon as the law does not require compulsory attendance. A very small percentage of the Mexican-American youths ever enroll in college, let alone finish.

Many people tend to put the blame for the condition on a "language problem". Others say that the attitudes of the community-home culture are responsible for the problem. Some experts may say that it is a lack of understanding by the school teachers and the administrators, while others say the condition is caused by racial discrimination, and a feeling of inferiority by the Mexican-American youth.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to determine what the attitudes of the Mexican-American student is toward Cerritos College. The secondary purpose of the study will hopefully give some conclusive information as to what the Mexican-American student of Cerritos College thinks are the reasons for his peer friends dropping out of college and/or not being motivated into going to college after high school graduation. It may be generally assumed that even though the Mexican-American community population of the Cerritos College District may be as high as fifty thousand, as few as 150 - 200 of these people attend the tuition-free Cerritos College on a full-time basis. It should be noted though that perhaps a small number may be enrolled in a private educational institution, one of the State Colleges or University of California campuses, or a private vocational or technical school.

PROCEDURE

It was determined that the Office of Student Affairs at Cerritos College would select through random sampling forty female and forty male full-time students who had a Spanish surname. Out of this number it was hoped that there would be at least twenty-five female and twenty-five male students who would be of Mexican-American ethnic background and would participate in the study by responding.

A letter explaining the purpose and nature of the study was sent to each student's home via U. S. Mail along with the questionnaire and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return mailing. After three weeks twenty-eight male and twenty-five female questionnaires were completed. (For a copy of this letter and the questionnaire, please see appendix).

A total of fifty-three returned questionnaire surveys were then used for compilation of the data received. The respondent remained anonymous to the institution, unless however, he chose to let us know in some manner what his identity was. It was assumed that if the respondent could remain anonymous, we could get good, honest answers. We believe that the following results are significantly candid responses.

RESULTS

The surveyed group included an almost even number of males and females. There was found to be no significant difference in the responses of males and females, so no separation of the data was made.

The first section of the questionnaire survey that dealt with "yes" or "no" responses to discrimination and/or acceptance by the college community provided the following results:

1. To question number one; "any incidents in which you felt you were being discriminated against by other students", forty-eight, (approximately 90%), students said "no" and five answered "yes".
2. There was no significant change for question number two, "any discrimination by college staff", when forty-nine answered "no" and only four students said "yes" to discrimination.
3. In question number three there was some change, however not significant. The majority of respondents said that they are accepted socially by the other students. Only ten students,(approximately 20%), said that they didn't feel socially accepted.

4. Question number four, "does College staff understand the problems of Mexican-American students", showed that the respondents were fairly evenly divided. There were twenty-two students who said that the staff understood their problems whereas twenty-six indicated that staff didn't understand their problems. Five students reported they couldn't honestly answer the question.

5. In question number five that asked students to rate or rank their attitudes about reasons for "dropping out" and/or "not going to college", the reasons that were given by more than fifty per cent of the students as <u>foremost</u> and <u>serious</u> were:

   A. Economic reasons; not enough money for books, clothes, transportation, living expenses, etc.,

   F. Problems with teachers and academic curriculum,

   G. Communicative, language problems and/or accent.

   The other reasons that received <u>some</u> concerned student-attitude responses from the majority who responded were:

   C. Military enlistment,

   D. College not important to parent,

   E. "Feel inferior",

   J. Rather go out and "earn a living".

The remaining four reasons listed in question number five were not rated as important by the majority of students. These were reasons B, H, I, and K. (Note table on page 7 for tallied responses).

6. Question number six received practically no action. Most of the fifty-three respondents either left the question blank or wrote the word "none". One male student said that the Selective Service Boards discriminate against Mexican-Americans by changing their status from "2-S" to "1-A" even though they are making the grades and units. Another male student wrote two pages on why Cerritos should have a better new student orientation program. The rest of the written responses to number six were short statements that in effect said there was no discrimination and generally were complimentary to the institution.

Table 1

CERRITOS COLLEGE MEXICAN-AMERICAN STUDENT ATTITUDE RESPONSES ON WHY FRIENDS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN ETHNIC BACKGROUND DROP OUT OF COLLEGE OR DO NOT GO TO COLLEGE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

REASONS OR CAUSES	Tallied Responses			
	Very Important	Significant Importance	Of Some Importance	Of No Importance
A. Economic reasons; not enough money for clothes, living expenses, etc.	27	18	9	0
B. No need for more education	2	9	18	14
C. Military enlistment	3	10	21	17
D. Parents do not feel going to college is important	4	9	22	17
E. "Feel inferior"	4	14	24	10
F. Problems with teachers and academic curriculum	12	14	20	4
G. Communicative-Language problems	14	17	14	5
H. Can't get into social clubs and organizations	2	3	18	28
I. Marriage	4	4	18	27
J. Rather go out and "earn a living"	9	14	25	4
K. Mexican-American Community belittles going to college	1	2	15	33

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The overwhelming majority (90%) of students from Mexican-American ethnic backgrounds attending Cerritos College say that they are not aware nor have they encountered discrimination from other students or members of the teaching and administrative staff during their enrollment.

Eighty per cent, or a significantly sizeable number of these minority students attending Cerritos College say that they are also accepted socially into clubs, organizations, and all extra-curricular activities.

Slightly more than fifty per cent of the students who were involved in the study said however, that they felt the teaching and administrative staff does not understand the problems of the Mexican-American student.

Over fifty per cent of the students who responded to the questionnaire felt that the major reasons Mexican-American youngsters do not attend college is because of financial reasons, problems with teachers and curriculum, and communication-language difficulties. Over fifty per cent of the surveyed students indicate some concern about going to college because of the following reasons: parents who don't feel going to college is important, military enlistment, attitude of "feeling inferior" to other students, and the desire to "get out and earn a living".

Recommendations for the institution would be to find ways of retention for the Mexican-American by providing part-time job opportunities and student loans. Careful programming and regular counseling sessions perhaps could lower the drop-out rate by getting the student help before it is too late. For the student who enters the institution with poor language skills, special language art classes could be provided to attempt remediation for his language problems.

Some of the problems which seem to prevent Mexican-American students from attending college are going to have to be resolved in the more formative years of life, in the school, home, and the community-at-large.

The conclusions and/or results of this study do not imply that similar projects in other communities of California or for that matter the western part of the United States would produce the same results. The Cerritos College District is still basically suburban and the attitudes of the Mexican-American youth living in this area could change very radically from the attitudes of those Mexican-Americans attending a two-year Community College in East Los Angeles, San Jose, or El Centro.

Our overall positive conclusion from this study might best be summed up by what one anonymous freshman female student wrote on the back side of her questionnaire:

> "I feel that Cerritos is an excellent school and that students that attend Cerritos are there because they want to be there in order to obtain a higher education. I personally do not feel I'm discriminated against. Usually those that do, already have an inferiority complex before reaching the college level."

Appendix

☐ MALE ☐ FRESHMAN
☐ FEMALE ☐ SOPHOMORE

QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY OF STUDENTS OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE CONCERNING PERSONAL ATTITUDES ABOUT CERRITOS COLLEGE

YES ☐ NO ☐ 1. As a student at Cerritos College have you encountered any incidents or situations in which you felt that you were being discriminated against by other students because of your ethnic background?

YES ☐ NO ☐ 2. Have you been aware of any form of discrimination used by a member of the teaching or administrative staff against you because of your ethnic background?

YES ☐ NO ☐ 3. Do you feel that you are accepted socially by the other students at extra-curricular activities (e.g. dances, athletic events, etc.)?

YES ☐ NO ☐ 4. Does college teaching and administrative staff understand the problems of students from Mexican-American background?

5. What do you personally believe are the reasons that many of your friends of Mexican-American heritage drop out of college or do not go to college after high school graduation? Mark as many of the following as you wish and rank them in order of value:

1 - VERY IMPORTANT
2 - SIGNIFICANT IMPORTANCE
3 - OF SOME IMPORTANCE
4 - OF NO IMPORTANCE

CIRCLE ONE:

1 2 3 4 A. Economic reasons--not enough money for living expenses, books, transportation, clothes, etc.

1 2 3 4 B. See no need for any more education beyond high school.

1 2 3 4 C. Military enlistment.

1 2 3 4 D. Parents do not care or feel that going to college is important.

1 2 3 4 E. "Feel inferior" to other students.

1 2 3 4 F. Problems with teachers and academic curriculum.

1 2 3 4 G. Communicative, language problems and/or speech accent.

1 2 3 4 H. Unable to gain admission socially into fraternities, sororities, and other social clubs and organizations.

1 2 3 4 I. Marriage.

1 2 3 4 J. Rather go out and "earn a living".

1 2 3 4 K. Mexican-American community belittles going to college.

6. If you are dissatisfied with the institution in any way regarding matters pertaining to this questionnaire, and could change things, what changes would you make? _____

_____

_____

CERRITOS COLLEGE

11110 east alondra boulevard • norwalk, california 90650 • area code 213, 860-2451

Dear Student:

Attached is a questionnaire survey. Would you kindly take a few minutes to respond honestly to each question and then mail the questionnaire back to me in the enclosed envelope. If you prefer to deliver the questionnaire to our office, please feel free to do so any time between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. Conclusions determined from this student survey will be used in a confidential manner as a study project for a graduate class at Long Beach State College. The administration of the College may also wish to study the questionnaire responses and the results of the survey as a means of making improvements within the institution.

If you wish to chat about any particular item on the questionnaire or have questions regarding the questionnaire, kindly feel free to stop by and see me in the Office of Student Affairs. If you personally are interested in the results of the survey after it has been completed, you will be welcome to a copy of the results by making a request in person to me.

Your immediate attention and support in this matter is sincerely appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

Richard Robinson
Dean of Men
Office of Student Affairs

Enclosures: 2

April 25,1968

Mr. Robinson
Dean of Men
Cerritos College

I am writing this letter in regards to your questionaire of April 25, 1968.

My entire name is Mrs. Lynnette Franks Moralez, therefore I do not feel qualified to answer these questions, since I am of German heritage.

Also, for your information I would like you to notice the spelling of my last name-MORALE4 . This spelling designates the origin of my husband's ancestory from the region of Castile in Spain from which they migrated over 150 years ago.

Because of his blond hair and blue eyes, my husband also does not feel qualified in answering these questions ;because this is the first time that either of us has been considered to be of Mexican-American origins.

I would also like to make a suggestion in regards to this type of questionaire; perhaps a person of Mexican-American origins would feel prejudiced against when he is asked to fill out this information when it so obviously sets him apart from the rest of the community, for I do not believe that if I were still using by my maiden name that I would be expected to answer these personal questions about my "Problems with teachers" concerning my German ancestry. Perhaps race problems would not be so obvious if these minority groups were allowed to live in peace and not answer these